

SAFEGUARDING POLICY



October 2023

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the responsibility that an organisation has to ensure that their employees and volunteers, partners, vendors, operations and programmes do no harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults (together referred to as ‘vulnerable people’ under this policy); that they do not expose them to the risk of discrimination, neglect, harm and abuse; and that any concerns the organisation has about the safety of vulnerable people within the communities in which they work, are dealt with and reported to the appropriate authorities. It is also the responsibility that the organisation has for protecting its employees and volunteers when they are vulnerable, for example, when ill or at risk of harm or abuse.

Through their work, Lafiya employees, employees of partner organisations and volunteers may engage with vulnerable people either directly or indirectly. Lafiya recognises it has an obligation to put in place all reasonable safeguarding measures to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and protection of vulnerable people including those with whom we work and those in the communities where Lafiya’s work is undertaken.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity to all employees, employees of partners, and volunteers on how they should engage with vulnerable people when working for, on behalf of, or in partnership with Lafiya. It is also to help us make sure that employees, volunteers and other representatives are protected. Any breach of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter, which may result in immediate termination of employment or contract, withdrawal of volunteer status, and reporting to the police, relevant regulatory authority or other body.

Definitions

Abuse - a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take the form of physical, psychological, financial or sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the health, survival, development or dignity of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Child – Lafiya regards a child as anyone under the age of 18 years. It is widely recognised that children are generally more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to factors such as age, gender, social and economic status, developmental stage, and dependence on others.

Vulnerable adult - a person, 18 years and above, who by reason of disability, age, gender, social and economic status, or illness, the context they are in, may be unable to take care of or to protect him or herself against abuse, harm or exploitation.

Vulnerable person/people – for the purposes of this policy this is an umbrella term which covers children, young people and vulnerable adults

Scope

This policy is mandatory for all Lafiya employees. For the purposes of this policy, ‘employee’ is defined as anyone who works for or on behalf of Lafiya, either in a paid or unpaid capacity. This therefore includes directly employed staff, trustees, contractors, employees and volunteers of sub contractors, agency workers, consultants, volunteers, interns and all visitors to Lafiya offices.

Policy Statement

Lafiya has zero tolerance against abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people. Lafiya also recognises

that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that it has an obligation to put in place reasonable measures to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people with whom it works with.

- Lafiya works to the following key principles to protect vulnerable children and people: Everyone has an equal right to protection from abuse and exploitation regardless of age, race, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or having a child, gender reassignment, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status.
- The best interests of the vulnerable child and/or person are paramount and shall be the primary consideration in our decision making
- Lafiya will take responsibility to meet our obligations regarding our duty of care towards vulnerable children and/or people, and act where we believe that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk or is actually harmed.
- Lafiya will ensure that employees and volunteers are inducted in our Safeguarding Standards
- Lafiya will ensure that all partners are informed and in compliance with our Safeguarding Standards.
- When working with or through partners or sub contracted agencies, Lafiya will ensure that their safeguarding procedures are consistent and in line with the principles and approaches set out in this policy.
- Lafiya respects confidentiality and has a responsibility to protect sensitive personal data. Information should only be shared and handled on a need-to-know basis, that is, access to the information must be necessary for the conduct of one's official duties. Only individuals who have legitimate reasons to access the information are allowed to receive it.
- Lafiya commits to monitoring the implementation of the safeguarding policy. This policy will be reviewed every two years and earlier if necessary.

Responsibilities

All employees, volunteers, consultants, agency staff, subcontractors, partner organisations and visitors are obliged to follow this policy and maintain an environment that prevents exploitation and abuse and which encourages reporting of breaches of this policy using the appropriate procedures.

All people working with Lafiya will:

- Read, understand and adhere to Lafiya Safeguarding Policy and Lafiya Code of Conduct Policy
- Strive to promote a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse in all working environments
- Strive to develop relationships with all stakeholders which are based on equality, trust, respect and honesty
- Place the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable people above all other considerations
- Report any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child or vulnerable person
- Report any concerns they may have about the behaviour of a person representing Lafiya in relation to safeguarding

All people working with Lafiya will not:

- Sexually harass, assault, or abuse a child or another person
- Physically harass, assault (including hitting, slapping, kicking, etc.) or abuse a child or another person
- Emotionally abuse a child or another person, such as engaging in behaviour intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade
- Condone, or participate in behaviour which is abusive, discriminatory, illegal, or unsafe to children or vulnerable people

- Develop, encourage, or fail to take action on relationships with children or other vulnerable people which could in any way be deemed sexual, exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be violent, inappropriate or sexually provocative to children or other persons
- Agree with a child to keep a secret which has implications for their safety or the safety of other young people.

Management

Managers and directors at all levels are responsible for ensuring employees, volunteers, consultants, visitors and partner organisations are aware of the policy and are supported to implement and work in accordance with it, as well as creating a management culture that encourages a focus on safeguarding. They must ensure that they are responsive, acting immediately if they become aware of any safeguarding concerns, and supportive towards employees or volunteers who complain about breaches in this policy.

Executive team

Lafiya Executive team is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and associated procedures and ensuring that everyone linked with Lafiya is equipped and supported to meet their responsibilities.

Implementation and review

- Lafiya Safeguarding Policy will have an initial review after one year and then after every two years.
- Lafiya's Safeguarding Policy and procedures together with the Lafiya Code of Conduct cover all aspects of our operations and programming and will be implemented in all Lafiya programs across all regions.

Procedure overview

All Lafiya employees and volunteers must sign and abide by this safeguarding policy and the Code of Conduct. The code sets out the standards of practice we expect of employees and volunteers - in terms of professional competence, integrity, acting as a representative and safeguarding - which support our vision, mission and values.

Data protection

As part of our safeguarding, Lafiya will ensure that personal information is kept confidential unless we have the agreement of the individual and/or their parent/guardian, except where it is necessary to pass this to a specialised child welfare or law enforcement agency in relation to a safeguarding incident. There is more information available in our Data protection policy.

Raising and responding to concerns

Lafiya places a mandatory obligation on all employees, volunteers, contractors and partners to report concerns, suspicions, allegations and incidents which indicate actual or potential abuse or exploitation of vulnerable people or which suggests this policy may have in any other way been breached. It is not the responsibility of the employees to decide whether or not abuse has taken place, however, concerns should be raised with an individual's line manager who will initiate the procedure for dealing with suspected or actual incidents of abuse

To ensure that all such situations are handled appropriately and effectively:

- Reports must be made, and decisions and actions taken

- All sensitive and personal data must be kept confidential (including the names of anyone who makes a report of abuse) and be shared on a strictly ‘need-to-know basis’, that is, access must be necessary for the conduct of one’s official duties.
- Lafiya is committed to a robust, confidential reporting and investigation (liaising with the appropriate authority) procedure which leads to timely and effective reporting and investigation involving the right internal or external professionals
- All staff, partner staff, implementing partner staff, contractors, visitors, and volunteers are mandated to report any suspected child safeguarding incidents or concerns to the co-executive director responsible for HR: celine.kamsteeg@lafiyanigeria.org / +31653194447 or to the Nigerian board: fatima.adamu@lafiyanigeria.org / +2348036154788
- Child safeguarding concerns involving criminal conduct reported to the relevant statutory authority unless doing so would place the child at additional risk of harm or there is another justifiable risk in reporting
- There is no threshold for reporting a child safeguarding concern as described in this policy. Any concern, however minor, must be reported.
- All suspected or actual incidents are to be reported as a matter of urgency and always within 24 hours of a person becoming aware of the incident.

Poor Safeguarding Practice

Poor safeguarding practice takes place whenever staff or any other person fail to provide the standard of care and support expected and directed by policies and procedures delivered by Lafiya. Poor safeguarding practice can occur through non-compliance with policies and procedures and when staff and third parties to whom this Policy applies ignore the rights and welfare of beneficiaries. Continued poor safeguarding practices may cause harm and can become abuse. Lafiya takes poor safeguarding practices seriously and deems them unacceptable. Poor safeguarding practices must be reported. All reported cases of poor safeguarding practice will be dealt with in line with Lafiya safeguarding policies and/or disciplinary processes.

Admin/HR Clearance

I _____ hereby declare that I understand and agree to abide by the above principles and procedures in the Lafiya Safeguarding Policy. I understand that any violation of the safeguarding policy will be reported through the local reporting channels and appropriate action will be taken.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of organization: